

N. W. Rankin Dec 86

FIRST SERIES.

FRIENDLY WORDS
TO
EDUCATED NATIVES.

NO. 12

RESULTS OF PREACHING.

BY G. BOWEN, MISSIONARY.

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Friendly Words to Educated Natives.

RESULTS OF PREACHING.

THE Gospel aims to establish a kingdom characterized by righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; to turn men from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the power of God; in a word to redeem them from all iniquity and bring them into abiding harmony with God. These are great and sublime aims; but unless accompanied by the power to bring about these transformations, they are only calculated to cover with ridicule those that avow them.

Some may be ready to cry out at once, that no results at all proportionate to such high aims have been witnessed, and that the condition of Christendom proclaims

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that no such powers accompany the Gospel. Without stopping to enquire whether the state of Christendom compares unfavourably with that of other portions of the globe, we content ourselves with drawing attention to the fact that the Gospel does not propose to do men good, except so far as its conditions are complied with. The Gospel aims to recover men from the dominion of evil habits, but only with their own consent; unless they are willing to be saved from these habits, it can avail them nothing. Repentance and faith are necessary that the blessings of the Gospel may be experienced. Let there be a suitable attention to the teachings of the Bible and the conscience will be illuminated, men will condemn themselves for their past lives, and will feel their need of just such a salvation as it offers. There is not a single promise in the Bible to those who merely *profess* to be Christians, or to those who only partially submit to Christ. No man can serve two masters. Except a man forsake all

that he hath, he cannot be my disciple, says Christ. Conviction of sin must go before the blessings of the Gospel, and the great reason why there is such unwillingness to believe on Christ, is that men have no deep conviction of sin, and turn with aversion from every thing that would awaken this conviction. A remedy is of no avail to those who think themselves free from the disease which it professes to heal. Deliverance is not a welcome boon to those who love their captivity. There is nothing more universal in this world than pride, and it hinders men from perceiving that they are apostates from God and exposed to his wrath. They prefer to flatter themselves with the idea that they are quite as good as could reasonably be expected from men in their circumstances. Men easily perceive the sin of their fellow-men, but exercise their ingenuity in palliating their own conduct. Now the Gospel ought to have the power of convincing men of their sinfulness and of their need of salvation ; and it has this

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power in a preeminent degree but only when due attention is given to it. No man can give prolonged attention to the truths that cluster round the cross of Christ without getting profounder views of the holiness and sovereignty and goodness of God, and without being made more deeply sensible of the odiousness of sin as committed against such a great and gracious Being. These effects have been witnessed wherever the Gospel has been faithfully preached, all over the world. Men have been awakened to a consciousness of their fallen state, have repented of their sins, and committed themselves to the saving grace of the Lord Jesus and have soon been filled with joy and peace in believing. Wherever the Gospel has been faithfully proclaimed by those who have themselves had experience of its power, such fruits have been witnessed. Men who are embittered against the truth are not in a position to recognize it, either in the New Testament or in the churches composed of Evangel-

ical Christians. And we do not aim to convince those who are in this state of mind; we can only pray that they may be brought into a state of mind better suited to appreciate evidence. But we claim that there are almost every where communities, not always large, composed of men and women, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, disclaiming altogether the idea of any goodness or worth of their own, or ability to keep from sin, and at the same time making it evident that they are receiving through Christ grace to bear such fruits as these: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

In order to understand what has been accomplished by the preaching of the Gospel, we must take note of the forces arrayed against it. The inhabitants of the ancient Roman Empire had religions which had come down to them from a high antiquity, and which they valued very much as the Hindoos value Hinduism. They were not unwilling to

introduce new Gods into their Pantheon, and if Christians had consented, they would have given Jesus Christ a place among their numerous deities. But the followers of Jesus demanded the rejection of all other worship save that which was taught in the Gospel and were ready to lay down their lives rather than burn incense before the image of the emperor. Thus all the forces of an hereditary priesthood, and those of the mighty Roman Empire, to say nothing of popular prejudice and philosophic aversion, were arrayed against the preachers of the Gospel. And who were these preachers? For the most part, men of the people, illiterate, poor, representing no force that men cared for. Ten fierce persecutions were waged against the Christians under the Roman emperors, but unsuccessfully. The persecuted cheerfully underwent the various martyrdoms to which they were subjected. But somehow or other their numbers and boldness so far from diminishing, continually increased until the

Emperor of Rome proclaimed himself a Christian and Christianity the religion of the state. But when the Gospel began to prosper in the world and to secure for itself the sources of worldly influence and power, it became corrupted, the conditions of discipleship were no longer observed, the world embraced the altered Gospel, and came into the church and swamped it. This led to the rise of the Papacy and also to that of Mohammedism. The Gospel manifested its power during the dark ages by raising up one and another to resist the usurpations of priestcraft, and the history of the Inquisition and similar courts is really the history of those who were struggling to give voice to the instruction of the word of God. Since the reformation and the discovery of the art of printing, the Bible has been translated into the vernaculars of men, and brought within the reach of all classes, and there has been liberty for men to follow their convictions and to declare them. Any one who is acquaint-

more effective than at the present day. The Bible has been translated into nearly three hundred languages in this century. nor is there any country where its evangelists are not found exhorting men to prepare to meet Him who having once come for the salvation of men is coming now to judge them.









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